

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /057 W
-----113116 210723Z /20

P R 210545Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5750
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 8902

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, AR, IF
SUBJECT: IRANIAN CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: TEHRAN 11183

1. THE ANSWERS PROVIDED BY CHARGE MIKLOS TO ZELLI (PARAGRAPH 2, REFTEL) ARE ESSENTIALLY CORRECT.
2. THE AFGHAN AMBASSADOR IN ISLAMABAD IS NUR AHMAD ETEMADI, A FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF AFGHANISTAN DURING THE MONARCHY. ALTHOUGH ETEMADI IS KNOWN TO BE OCCASIONALLY CRITICAL OF HIS KINSMAN, PRESIDENT DAOUD, HE APPEARS TO BE A TRUSTED MEMBER OF THE LATTER'S DIPLOMATIC CORPS (ETEMADI'S LAST ASSIGNMENT WAS MOSCOW) AND CONTINUES TO BE STRONGLY RUMORED AS ONE OF THE VICE PRESIDENTS DAOUD PLANS TO DESIGNATE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE HAVE EVEN HEARD ONE RUMOR THAT HE MIGHT REPLACE WAHEED ABDULLAH AS FOREIGN MINISTER. WE CAN ONLY PRESUME THAT HIS IRANIAN COLLEAGUE AT ISLAMABAD EXAGGERATED ETEMADI'S VIEWS.
3. WHILE AFGHAN AFFAIRS CAN CONCEIVABLY BECOME
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UNRAVELED VERY QUICKLY AND VIOLENTLY, DAOUD STILL APPEARS TO BE HEALTHY AND FIRMLY IN CHARGE AT THIS TIME. THE POLITICAL AND PUBLIC SAFETY PROBLEMS CITED BY THE IRANIANS ARE BEING MANAGED BY THE REGIME IN A FASHION THAT EMPHASIZES CALM AND NORMALITY.

4. ALTHOUGH WE SEE NO VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THE

AFGHAN GOVERNMENT IS ACTIVELY SEEKING THE KILLERS OF CHIEF PILOT GRAN (A CRIME WHICH WAS NEVER REPORTED IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AFGHAN MEDIA), WE ALSO SEE NO VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT ANYONE OUTSIDE THE CIRCLES OF GRAN'S OWN FAMILY OR HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES CARES ENOUGH TO PROTEST. THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE GRAN ISSUE MIGHT NOT ARISE SOME DAY AS A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE REGIME.

5. THE SHORT-LIVED "REVOLT" OF THE FIVE OR SIX CABINET MINISTERS WHO SUBMITTED -- AND THEN WITHDREW -- THEIR RESIGNATIONS HAS NOT PRODUCED ANY DISCERNIBLE RESULTS SINCE DAOUD CONVINCED THE DISSIDENTS TO RETURN TO THEIR OFFICES. INDEED, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT HE IS NOW UNHURRIEDLY BIDDING HIS TIME, PLANNING WAYS TO PRUNE THESE "UNRELIABLE" MINISTERS OUT OF HIS CABINET (PERHAPS EXILING THEM TO AMBASSADORIAL POSTS -- A USUAL AFGHAN PRACTICE).

6. AS FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF PLANNING MINISTER KHURRAM, THERE HAS BEEN WHAT IS FOR THIS COUNTRY AN UNUSUAL DEGREE OF PUBLICIZED GOVERNMENT ACTION. ON DECEMBER 19, THE GOA IDENTIFIED THE CONFESSED KILLER, ONE MOHAMMAD MARJAN, AND ANNOUNCED THE ARRESTS OF SEVERAL OTHERS WITH WHOM HE HAD ALLEGEDLY PLOTTED (IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER CONFIDENTIAL

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THE "PLOTTERS" WERE "LEFTISTS" OR "RIGHTISTS" -- OR INDEED WHETHER THESE TERMS HAVE ANY REAL SIGNIFICANCE HERE IN OUR WESTERN SENSE). ALTHOUGH THIS STORY HAS NOT YET UNFOLDED IN ITS ENTIRETY, IT IS CREATING NO DISCERNIBLE SHOCK WAVES IN THE BODY POLITIC EITHER.

7. IN SHORT, WE REGARD THE KHALATBARY-ZELLI APPROACH AS ANOTHER CASE OF THE FAMILIAR IRANIAN JITTERS. ELIOT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KABUL08902
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770475-0434
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771232/aaaabaug.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 822f16ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TEHRAN 11183
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 161018
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IRANIAN CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN
TAGS: PGOV, AR, IR
To: TEHRAN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/822f16ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009